

CITY OF FITCHBURG

CONSOLIDATED PLAN - CITIZEN PARTICIPATION PROCESS

The following plan shall serve as a guide for the City of Fitchburg in its attempt to encourage citizen participation in all stages of the Consolidated Plan (“The Plan”) Process, in particular to encourage participation of residents of the City’s designated low/moderate income Neighborhood Strategy Area. (See Map.) Copies of this plan shall be kept on file at the Fitchburg Department of Community Development and made available to citizens for their review during normal working hours. It is intended to comply fully with all Consolidated Plan citizen participation requirements, including Subpart M - Loan Guarantees of the Community Development Block Grant Program (CDBG), and includes the following elements:

DEVELOPMENT OF THE CONSOLIDATED PLAN

The City shall prepare and make available information to the public regarding the Consolidated Plan process including the process for submitting an intention to apply for or to support an application for HUD funded program, comments on the overall housing and community development needs of the City and the process in which new program year proposals for the use of CDBG funds will be accepted and reviewed. This will include a public comment form for the Consolidated Plan, a simple application form for CDBG funds and a program summary which explains basic CDBG program eligibility regulations and provides an estimate of program funds to be made available.

The City shall maintain a list of lower income neighborhood organizations and contracts, minority organizations, previous program year applicants, elected officials and other interested parties for notification concerning this application process, as well as scheduled public hearing and other program information as needed. Paid local advertising in the print media will be used to announce the availability of application forms and instructions.

The Fitchburg Department of Community Development will serve as the entity responsible for overseeing the development of the Consolidated Plan. The Plan documents the overall housing and community development needs of the City and serves as a consolidated application package for all HUD funded projects to address those needs. The Fitchburg Planning Board will serve as the designated CDBG program advisory board and will initiate the CDBG proposal review process, conduct the first public hearing and then submit its list of recommended CDBG projects to the Mayor. The final list of recommended CDBG projects, submitted after review by the City Council and approval of the Mayor will, along with the completed Plan, serve as the City’s Proposed Consolidated Plan and Statement of CDBG Activities.

The City shall consider all comments received, either in writing or orally at public hearings, on the Proposed Plan and Proposed Amendments to the Final Plan and will attach a summary of these comments and the City’s response to the Final Consolidated Plan and Statement of CDBG Activities.

PROPOSED CONSOLIDATED PLAN AND STATEMENT OF CDBG ACTIVITIES

Citizens shall be provided with reasonable and timely access to local meetings, information and records relating to the City's proposed Plan and Statement of CDBG Activities. The proposed Plan and Statement of Activities shall be published in the local print media each year concurrent with a notice of the City's second public hearing soliciting citizen comments on the Plan and Proposed Statement. The proposed Plan and Statement will be published in such a manner so as to allow not less than a thirty day public comment period. Copies of the Proposed Plan and Statement of Activities as well as the Final Plan and Statement of CDBG Activities shall be kept on file during normal working hours for citizens to review at the Office of the Planning Coordinator. All materials will be made available in a form accessible to persons with disabilities, upon request.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

The City shall hold no less than two public hearings for the following purposes:

1. The first public hearing shall be held by the Fitchburg Planning Board after proposals for the use of upcoming program year CDBG funds have been received and prior to the start of the local review process. This public hearing shall be held to:

- a. Provide information on the upcoming program year,
- b. Solicit comments on proposed CDBG projects,
- c. Solicit comments on the overall housing and community development needs of the City and on Fitchburg's performance in implementing the CDBG program.

2. The second public hearing shall be held to solicit citizen comments on the following:

- a. Fitchburg's Proposed Consolidated Plan and Statement of CDBG Activities,
- b. The City's Housing and Community Development Needs and its performance in implementing the CDBG Program,
- c. The City's Displacement Minimization and Assistance Plan. (See Attached.)

3. Additional public hearings shall be held, as necessary, to discuss the overall community development and housing needs and strengths of Fitchburg, to solicit comments from the public regarding the proposed changes and/or substantial amendments to the use of funds or to provide information on changes in program regulations.

Notices of all public hearings shall be published through paid advertising in local media and posted at City Hall at least two weeks prior to the hearing/meeting dates. Public hearings shall generally be held during evening hours in order to afford working persons an opportunity to attend. Hearings are to be held in a location which is easily accessible from and central to the City's lower income neighborhood strategy area. Sites chosen for all public hearings shall include facilities for the access of persons with disabilities. A Consolidated Plan Program schedule, which includes dates, times and locations of all hearings and meetings established in the process, will be published and mailed to all potential CDBG applicants and parties interested in the Plan.

OTHER MEETINGS

In addition to Public Hearings, meetings with the local housing authority and other community providers will be held to identify and discuss the overall housing and community development needs of the City and other matters pertaining to the development of The Plan.

AMENDMENTS TO FINAL CONSOLIDATED PLAN AND STATEMENT OF CDBG ACTIVITIES

A proposed change in a Final Consolidated Plan activity shall be considered a substantial change and will require an amendment to the City's Final Consolidated Plan and Statement of CDBG Activities in the event that any one of the following criteria is applicable:

1. The proposed change would alter an activity's funding level by greater than 50%, or \$10,000, whichever is greater,
2. A review of the proposed change indicates that it would substantially alter the purpose of the activity, even if its intended beneficiaries do not change (i.e. change from a youth drop-out prevention program to a youth summer jobs program),
3. A review of the proposed change reveals that it would substantially alter the intended beneficiaries of that activity. This would include, but not limited to, the following:
 - a. A substantial change in the location of an activity whose benefits are clearly area-specific,
 - b. A substantial change in age group, income level or other significant characteristic of the population originally targeted for benefit by that activity.

Citizens shall be provided with reasonable and timely access to local meetings, information and records relating to the City's proposed Amendments to the Final Consolidated Plan and Statement of CDBG Activities. A summary of any and all proposed Amendments to the Plan and Statement of Activities shall be published in the local print media in such a manner as to allow not less than a thirty day public comment period. Copies of the proposed Amendments to the Plan and Statement of Activities shall be kept on file during normal working hours for citizens to review at the Department of Community Development. All materials will be made available in a form accessible to person with disabilities, upon request.

PERFORMANCE REPORT

The City shall, on an annual basis, conduct a review of and complete a written report on its compliance with the Final Consolidated Plan and Statement of CDBG Activities.

Notice of the availability of the Performance Report for public review will be published in the local print media and posted at City Hall in such a manner as to allow not less than a fifteen day public comment period. Copies of the Performance Report shall be kept on file during normal working hours for citizens to review at the Department of Community Development. All materials will be made available in a form accessible to persons with disabilities, upon request.

All comments received will be considered in the completion of the final Performance Report. A summary of the comments and the City's response will be attached to the Performance Report submitted to HUD.

NON-ENGLISH SPEAKING RESIDENTS

In recognition that the City's multi-ethnic neighborhoods include many non-English speaking, primarily Hispanic residents, the City shall make provisions for the participation of these residents at public hearings through the services of a translator who is fluent in both English and Spanish. The City shall, from time to time, review this policy to determine whether other non-English speaking minorities will require additional translation services at these hearings.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND APPLICATION FOR FUNDS

The City shall continue its policy of providing on-going planning and technical assistance to lower income neighborhoods and neighborhood organizations, including minority organizations, to assist in the identification of neighborhood needs and in efforts designed to address these needs. Such assistance shall include grant writing assistance in preparing proposals for the CDBG program on an as needed and as requested basis.

WRITTEN COMPLAINTS AND GRIEVANCES

It shall be the policy of the City to respond in writing to all correspondence received which requests a response, or which comes in the form of a complaint or grievance. Such response shall be in a timely manner not to exceed fifteen working days, where practicable.